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# IMMORTALITY AND THE NEW THEODICY

BY

✓  
GEORGE A. GORDON

MINISTER OF THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH, BOSTON



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## THE INGERSOLL LECTURESHIP

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*Extract from the will of Miss Caroline Haskell Ingersoll,  
who died in Keene, County of Cheshire, New  
Hampshire, Jan. 26, 1893.*

*First.* In carrying out the wishes of my late beloved father, George Goldthwait Ingersoll, as declared by him in his last will and testament, I give and bequeath to Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass., where my late father was graduated, and which he always held in love and honor, the sum of Five thousand dollars (\$5,000) as a fund for the establishment of a Lectureship on a plan somewhat similar to that of the Dudleian lecture, that is — one lecture to be delivered each year, on any convenient day between the last day of May and the first day of December, on this subject, “the Immortality of Man,” said lecture not to form a part of the usual college course, nor to be delivered by any Professor or Tutor as part of his usual routine of instruction, though any such Professor or Tutor may be appointed to such service. The choice of said lecturer is not to be limited to any one religious denomination, nor to any one profession, but may be that of either clergyman or layman, the appointment to take place at least six months before the delivery of said lecture. The above sum to be safely invested and three fourths of the annual interest thereof to be paid to the lecturer for his services and the remaining fourth to be expended in the publishment and gratuitous distribution of the lecture, a copy of which is always to be furnished by the lecturer for such purpose. The same lecture to be named and known as “the Ingersoll lecture on the Immortality of Man.”



*Every one of my fellow-creatures who leaves this earthly brotherhood, and whom, because he is my brother, my spirit cannot regard as annihilated, draws my thoughts after him beyond the grave; he is still, and to him there belongs a place. While we mourn for him here below,—as in the dim realms of unconsciousness there might be mourning when a man bursts from them into the light of this world's sun,—above there is rejoicing that a man is born into that world, as we citizens of earth receive with joy those who are born unto us. When I shall one day follow, it will be but joy for me; sorrow shall remain behind in the sphere I shall have left.*

FICHTE.

## PREFACE



THE following essay was written under the appointment by which the author was honored, as first Ingersoll lecturer upon "The Immortality of Man," in Harvard University. The appointment was received as a fresh call to return to a subject that for many years has occupied much of the writer's thought. Since the publication, four years ago, of his book, "The Witness to Immortality," new lines of argument have been suggested; and what is here offered to the public, in accordance with the terms of the Ingersoll bequest, although standing entirely by itself and resting solely on its own merits, may be considered as supplementary to the earlier and larger work.

It must be understood that the essay is a discussion purely upon rational grounds.

While it is impossible for the writer to reason as if Christianity had never been, or to ignore its supreme insight reigning in the moral consciousness of our great division of mankind, or to appear upon this or any other field of inquiry in any character other than that of a teacher of religion, he has still set before himself a philosophical endeavor, and has therefore considered it inadmissible to introduce into the argument the ultimate basis of Christian belief in the future life, the resurrection of Christ.

The special feature of the essay is indicated by the term theodicy. The shadow that lies upon the universe cannot hide its abiding moral order as revealed in human history. The attempt is therefore made, after the ground is cleared of the obstruction presented by a materialistic psychology, to carry the question of the immortality of man to the moral conception of the universe for determination. It is believed that upon the validity and integrity of the moral idea of the universe the entire

question turns. To exhibit that idea in its purity and absoluteness, in its freedom from the great historic limitations that have been fixed upon it and in its fruitfulness for faith, has been considered essential to the undertaking. The full strength of the logic of a universe conceived as absolutely righteous was deemed a necessity of the case. This accounts for the polemic in certain sections. It is a sincere sorrow to be obliged to differ upon some points from able and honored men with whom, in general, the writer is in profound agreement; but when the appeal is to the full and honest mind of the individual, above all when the truth is believed to be at stake and the life of humanity involved, the sorrow must be borne. In justification of his protest against Homer's orthodoxy, Plato thought it sufficient to say ἀλλ' οὐ γὰρ πρό γε τῆς ἀληθείας τιμητέος ἀνὴρ. And when it came Plato's turn, the polemic was again vindicated almost in his own words ἀμφοῖν γὰρ ὄντοι φίλον ὅσιον προτιμᾶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν. It is

the purpose recognized by this canon that absolves a writer from the charge of a want of reverence for the past when he is compelled to contend against it, and that supports the rights of adverse criticism upon his own work. When it is the sword of the spirit by which a man seeks to live, he could ask no happier fate than to die by it.



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# IMMORTALITY AND THE NEW THEODICY

## I

### *Conditions of the Discussion*



THE first note in Plato's discussion of immortality in the "Phædo" is the interest expressed in the personal bearing of Socrates face to face with death. The question is put at the start, "And how did he die?" The answer to this question constitutes the lengthened charm of the opening and the pathos and majesty of the closing chapters of the immortal dialogue. Readers of great literature, no less than those who bring their humanity with them to the consideration of the ultimate meaning of existence, will be slow to surrender these memorials of one of the strongest

and best of men, or to conclude that they are in the way of the argument. In Plato's hands the personal interest is present as motive to the philosophical endeavor; it is there as background, and as atmosphere to the strenuous picture. He employs it as introduction, recalls it from time to time in the course of the argument, and returns to it at the end, always in the service of the strictly rational consideration of his problem. In the strength of passionate desire to learn of the bearing of a great man confronted by death, the profound thinker moves out upon his incomparable discussion. And all those who hope to win even the slightest attention to their words upon this subject must here follow his example. They must bring their humanity into the field; as men they must come to the grand debate. The sense of death as a sore and solemn trial is almost universal, and those who, like Cromwell and Agricola, Paul and Socrates, lift it to the levels of moral grandeur, inspire a rev-

erential satisfaction that cannot be measured. In their various ways they flood death with their humanity ; they keep the problem which it raises a human problem, and thus create heart and hope for the intellectual wrestle with it. The multitudes continue to linger about the cross because of the sublimity of the personal bearing of Christ in death, and because they believe that he is humanity's best representative. It is through this deep and abiding interest in the fortune of men that the advance is made to the present argument. This passion of humanity, in which peasant and philosopher alike share, may be relied upon now, as when Socrates drank the hemlock, to sharpen the intellect for its task, to fill it with the incorruptible love of truth, and to hold it with patient wisdom to its best endeavor.

In any profitable consideration of the immortality of man, it is essential that the limits be determined within which the discussion must move. What to expect upon



#### 4      *Conditions of the Discussion*

a subject like this is half the battle. One must surrender at the start all hope of demonstration. But, then, absolute proof or demonstration is possible of a very small part of what is universally received as knowledge. It is clearly impossible to demonstrate the facts of history. At best they must be accepted on the testimony of witnesses; and even when the testimony is sifted by experts, the belief to which it leads is not grounded upon complete proof, but upon the capacity and integrity of the men from whom it came. The monumental record of Thucydides is universally accepted as true, not because his facts have been independently verified, but because of the confidence reposed in the historian. Nobody who appreciates the value of words pretends that the doctrine of evolution, which has become the working hypothesis of the intellectual world, is demonstrated. That would involve an exhaustive knowledge of the cosmos and its total history. Until man becomes omnis-

cient, the conception of development as giving the sole method by which the Creator works in space and time must remain incapable of complete attestation. No clear thinker will claim that the uniformity of nature is an idea established by induction. The induction would have to be as wide as cosmic history, it would have to be made by men as old as history, and to contemporaries of the same universal reach of life, in order for the doctrine of the uniformity of nature to stand, even as regards the past, upon the ground of demonstration. Suns rise and set, moons wax and wane, tides ebb and flow, seasons come and pass away, day and night follow each other in unbroken and impressive succession; and from the limited observation which we and our contemporaries are able to make, we conclude that this has been the invariable order from the beginning, and that it will continue to be the invariable order to the end. But the conclusion is a tremendous assumption, and if we can hold no beliefs

that are incapable of complete logical justification, we must surrender this and hundreds like it that are part of the substance of our solidest thinking. The remark of one traveler to another, on taking a last look at Mont Blanc before leaving Chamonix, "It appears as if it would stay there until we come back," exactly expresses the feeling toward the essential and indemonstrable assumptions of science. Upon the largest and best thought they inspire confidence in their validity, and nothing more can be said for them, or need be.

The belief in immortality is not, therefore, excluded from a legitimate place in human thought because it does not admit of demonstration. It is a future event, and as such cannot be proved. Even if the reports of the spiritist are accepted as authentic, still the fact that some men have survived death does not prove that all men must. A flock of sheep come to a river. A number of them swim safely

across, and bleat to their brethren behind, telling them as plainly as can be that they still live ; nevertheless the sheep who have not yet tried the river seem a good deal excited. The question with them is not whether others have survived the wash and beat of the stream, but whether they shall survive. That is not proved, and in the nature of the case cannot be. An intelligent member of the flock, having known the weakness of many of its brethren who report that they have safely crossed the flood, and wisely judging its own superior strength, might feel comfortably sure of survival. Spiritism, even if accepted as authentic, cannot yield demonstration. It still leaves those who have not tasted death in the sphere of moral faith. It may be admitted that if certain of its survivals were attested, it would practically remove all ground of fear for even the weakest among the living. The point to be observed, however, is that human immortality is incapable of demon-

stration, that absolute logical justification upon such a subject is impossible and even inconceivable. The discussion must therefore move in another sphere. Men must moderate their intellectual expectations, and be prepared to act here, as they do elsewhere, upon differing degrees of moral consideration. If the Eternal should speak, as millions of our fellow-men believe that he has spoken, upon this question, the acceptance of his word would not be repose in a demonstration, but confidence in the Divine speaker. Even on the part of those who accept it, the profoundest appeal of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is to moral confidence: "Because I live, ye shall live also." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 19.



## II

### *Signs of Hope*



THE prevailing mood upon this question of a future life among wise men is full of serious interest and hope. Generally it is one of prophetic silence. The oracles are dumb because they are under Bacon's command to weigh and consider. The old arguments, the venerable certainties, the traditional repose, are broken up, and again those who walk by faith are face to face with the ultimate order of the universe. It is always a good sign when men are "in mute dialogue with death, judgment, and eternity." Those who to-day are profound believers have come out of great tribulation ; they have won their faith through victorious insight ; they feel that they have seen God face to face, and that in

consequence their life is preserved. Those who doubt nobly, for the most part, doubt in hope. Thus the wise and governing mind, the mind that shapes the spiritual habit of the generation whose servant it is, is once more in movement upon this question of life after death. It is, as has been said, a prophetic hour. The oracles are dumb, not because they have nothing to say, but because they are preparing for a new apocalypse. The sense of difficulty is compelling silence; and golden silence is preceding golden speech. The oracles are dumb, not because the priest is dead, but because he is waiting for the new wisdom to gather in his heart, and form itself into a fresh and mightier message to the worshiper.

There is doubtless among us the mood of Swift, the mood of misery, contempt, and scorn. There are those who sympathize with him when they see him painting his awful picture of the Struldbrugs, making the flesh creep over the horror of

perpetual existence, inciting the heart to pray for the boon of self-forgetfulness, changing hope to fear, and lifting the light from the human ideal of endless life which it has hitherto glorified to the grim rest of absolute unconsciousness. But never as now was scorn so widely discredited as the key to the mystery of our being. Omar Khayyám still has his disciples. His light-hearted mockery, ghastly humor, and gay assurance of the emptiness of existence are to certain moral types contagious.

“ Myself when young did eagerly frequent  
Doctor and saint, and heard great argument,  
About it and about ; but evermore  
Came out by the same door wherein I went.

“ With them the seed of wisdom I did sow  
And with mine own hand wrought to make it grow,  
And this was all the harvest that I reap’d,  
I came like water and like wind I go.

. . . . .

“ The revelations of devout and learned  
Who rose before us, and as prophets burn’d,

Are all but stories, which, awoke from sleep,  
They told their comrades, and to sleep returned."

Still mirth, mockery, and dogmatism are not the method of the scientific spirit. Nor was there ever a time when they could be described with less truth as the accepted path to salvation.

The settled despair, the consistent and perfected pessimism of "The City of Dreadful Night," is too tremendous for the mob of unbelievers; and while many an heir of faith has to pass through this desert to his spiritual patrimony, it is the final abode of but few. The number is small of those who are permanently paralyzed with

"The sense that every struggle brings defeat  
Because Fate holds no prize to crown success;  
That all the oracles are dumb or cheat,  
Because they have no secret to express;  
That none can pierce the vast black veil uncertain  
Because there is no light behind the curtain;  
That all is vanity and nothingness."

Beyond all these is the Miltonic mood as given in the great Ode on the Nativity. The faith that has been is discredited, for

the reason that it stands in the presence of the faith that is to be.

“Apollo from his shrine  
Can no more divine”

because of the advent of a sublimer revelation. Old things are passed away in the sense that all things have become new. Many are the believers who to-day feel themselves compelled to raise the deepest questions, forced back until they stand face to face with the ultimate realities, driven to a new and tremendous wrestle with destiny, from whom the old certainties have been taken away, that once more they may think, and out of victorious thought discover the solider ground for the ineradicable faith. The discipline of doubt is indispensable to the growing insight of mankind ; and whenever, as to-day, and particularly upon the question of the future life, the sense of difficulty induces silence and profounder meditation, a prophetic hour has arrived. The deeper in-

sight will gradually perfect itself, and once again break upon the world in song,

“ Such music as ’t is said

Before was never made,

But when of old the sons of morning sung,

While the Creator great

His constellations set,

And the well-balanced world on hinges hung,

And cast the dark foundations deep,

And bid the weltering waves their oozy channel keep.”

The moods of pessimism come and go ; they are like the fresh outbreaks of a plague. While humanity is never secure against them, they do not abide, and it may be hoped that, with better intellectual sanitation and robuster character, they will finally disappear. At any rate, they are abnormal and cannot endure. The historian of thought knows that they are transient even when they persist through an entire generation. And we must return to the ultimate fact that the permanent in thought, the everlasting in belief, is the fabrication of the spirits in whom normal humanity is sovereign. Imagine an insect

of an hour's life born under the blackness of a thunder-cloud. What must needs be its philosophy of the universe ! The universe is going to wreck ; in this state of affairs it was born with multitudinous companions, and it dies with all things marching on to the apparently fatal catastrophe. Men know that it is otherwise in this imaginary instance, and yet they expand insignificant moods until they blot the sun out of heaven ; they elaborate abnormal and passing phases of thought until they seem to darken the universe ; they see the thunder-cloud and believe it to be the sign of doom.



### III

#### *The Deeper Issues of the Debate*



THE new prophetic mood to which reference has been made has already begun to utter itself in the clearer appreciation of the deeper issues of the grand debate. The problem is, of course, the permanence of the human personality, the continuance of the soul after death, in the possession of memory, reason, and self-conscious life. But this problem states itself as never before. It is no longer, as with the ancient world, a question of more or less of sensuous existence; nor, as with times that in comparison may be termed recent, a matter relating mainly to the gratification or disappointment of human desire. It is a duel between two contrasted philosophies of man's existence, between universal reason and its opposite,

between a noble optimism and an absolute pessimism. Are man's rational world and God's at heart coincident and concordant? Is the sphere in which human beings live, and which they seek to bring under the forms of reasonable thought and lofty morality, a harmonious part of the universe? Are the realms of the human and the Infinite capable of reconciliation, or are they in hopeless hostility? These are the issues involved. The question of the immortality of man is nothing less than the question of the reality of man's world, its integrity and worth for the universe. And this means simply the ultimate reasonableness or unreasonableness, the intelligence or brutality, of the Power that is responsible for our existence. The debate thus involves, at the outset, the life of reason, the reality of thought, the existence of an intelligible universe. This planet is surrounded by the stellar spaces, and the denial of immortality may be figured by the thought that the sky constitutes a fixed

barrier, a wall inside of which men live and think, but beyond which exists nothing for them. In that outside realm there are no correspondences to this in which they live ; reason and right with them are not reason and right with it. Between the circle within the wall and that beyond it, there is no continuity, no sympathy, no relation except one of dead antagonism. The rights of thought, the significance of conscience, the meaning of our human world, reach only to the walls, and over that barrier the infinite enemy of man is looking, and preparing an invasion that shall at last be an utter desolation. On the other hand, the assertion of the reality of a future life may be represented by the fact that the sky lifts itself as one rises into it, recedes before one into ever ampler spaces, as continuous with the places which one fills, as concordant with the earth upon which one lives. As space here and there is one, one in its nature and in its laws, so thought is thought, and right is right in time and in

eternity, with man and with God. And the fact that one part of the intelligible universe is under the government of reason and righteousness supports the faith that the whole compass of being is pervaded by a Mind that is creative and supreme. Thus the fundamental issues declare themselves.

It is further clear that the denial of immortality, equally with the affirmation of it, implies a faith. Unbelief is belief in disguise. Negative thought is implicitly positive thought ; for whoever denies that a given thing is true thereby affirms that its opposite is true. Denial is but the left hand of unbelief ; its right hand constructs and sustains a positive creed. Unbelief has its interpretation, its philosophy of human existence. It is assumed that the material organization, the body, in fact, is the main thing, its preservation and reproduction the chief end of life. Intelligence is not supreme but secondary, something called into existence incidentally, to help

forward, at a given stage, the great movement of unconscious life. This merely subsidiary intelligence is allowed to amuse itself with the idealisms of science, art, morality, politics, philosophy, and religion, inspired by the pleasures that support physical life and the pains that destroy it. The conception of man here indicated is of a being wholly terrestrial, whose thought has value only for his kind, whose morality has no consequence beyond his own weal or woe and that of his fellows, whose art is finite and whose religion is but a subjective dream. As it is impossible for man to get outside the attractive forces of the earth, to lift or project anything beyond terrestrial limits, as every missile fired, every aerial machine floated, however high it may go, is forever within the lines that sooner or later compel return, so it is held that human thought, character, and consequence are under similar fixed restrictions. The home of our bodies is the home of our souls. In origin, fortune, and destiny they

are identical. All efforts at the transcendence of material conditions are as foolish as the dream of the boy that he may some day fly his kite to the moon.

The ground of this faith of the unbeliever will come up for consideration presently. Here and now it is to be noted that his unbelief is a faith of the most stupendous kind. In our time a great body of literature has accumulated that practically ignores the possible transcendence of the human spirit.<sup>1</sup> Man is treated by these writers as beginning and ending his existence on the earth, and as sustaining no relations that go beyond the seen and the temporal. The literature in question passes under the general name of agnosticism, but it is aggressively dogmatic to a degree. If reference happens to be made to immortality it is to a belief that has

<sup>1</sup> For an admirable summary of this literature see the first chapter of Dr. Van Dyke's *The Gospel for an Age of Doubt*, a book of high value both for believers and unbelievers.

become completely incredible ; as in George Eliot's wild remark about the inconceivability of God, the impossibility of a future life, and the absoluteness of duty. The tacit assumption that the case is hopeless for spiritual faith, and that the limitation of human existence to this world is as plain as day, are chief cornerstones in the creed of the so-called agnostic. Under the pretense of intellectual humility a scheme is constructed that denies to human life universal significance, that treats all faith in a transcendent world as an illusion. The formula, "We do not know, and therefore we cannot believe," is but a beggar's blanket, and cannot be made to cover the case. The logical strategy set up in the term "agnosticism" is too weak to stand against the aggressive frankness of its apostle. His true name is not agnostic ; for he has constructed a definite philosophy of life, and his negation of the Infinite, whether in the form of indifference or reasoned



opinion, is part of his total conception of the universe. Huxley is a type of the class to which reference is made, and of him it must be said that he is as sure of cosmic hostility to man as any Hebrew prophet ever was that the stars in their courses fought for Israel ; he is as positive and, one might add, as enthusiastic in his faith that all things work together for evil to those who love, as Plato and Paul were that all things work together for good ; and it is clearly possible that unbelief no less than belief, negative thought as well as positive, may be a mistake. Believers have been of late so frequently reminded of the errancy of their Bibles, the fallibility of their traditions, and the weakness of their powers, by their brethren of the negative camp, that it may not be out of place to return the compliment. In view of the aggressive confidence with which these apostles of the materialistic creed preach their faith, it may not be amiss to remind them of Cromwell's ad-

vice to the Scotch, "I beseech you, in the tender mercies of the Lord, believe it possible that you may be mistaken." Every thinker takes his life in his hand, the denier no less than the affirmer. Unbelief is apt to pose as matter of fact against theory, as science against faith ; but the truth is that the universe by which men are confronted is a reality in itself, and all thoughts about it, whether affirmative or negative, whether described as belief or unbelief, are essentially of the nature of faith. Men stand equally to their contrasted interpretations of what passes before them ; neither believer nor unbeliever can pretend to a complete induction of the facts, nor to an infallible inference from those on hand. It must be understood, therefore, that the great poem of Lucretius is as truly the creation of faith as Dante's Divine Comedy. Both poets look upon the same universe ; they are spectators of the same pageant, and from what they see they form their contrasted judg-

ments of what is. They quarry their hostile faiths from the same rock, and, standing by them, await the judgment of the Eternal.

## IV

### *The Evidence for the Denial*



It is now in order to state the main evidence upon which unbelief rests its conclusion that there is no future life for man. This recalls the problem, the survival at death of the essential human personality, the continued conscious life of the soul after the dissolution of the body. To this position of faith it is objected that the fortune of both soul and body seems identical. The child new to earth and sky is as incapable mentally as it is physically. The growth of the physical organization is accompanied, in all normal cases, with a corresponding mental development. This process of increase is coincident to maturity, and in decline the coincidence is equally plain. Plato at seventy cannot think and

write as he did at fifty ; the mind that produced the Laws is no longer the genius that created the Republic. Bryant ceased to write poetry in his old age, and took to the translation of Homer, on the ground, as he says, that old age incapacitates for creative activity. There comes a day when a Gladstone must confess that he is no longer equal to the burden of political leadership, when a Martineau must decline to enter upon new tasks. John Henry Newman has recorded his opinion that after seventy severe intellectual exertion means death. And indeed this participation of both body and mind in a common fortune is undeniable. The helplessness of infancy, the vigor of youth, the power of manhood, and the décliné of old age extend to the total expression of man's life. There is, as Aristotle says, an old age of the mind, as well as of the body.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to this common fortune in which the spiritual and physical parts of

<sup>1</sup> *Pol.* ii. 9, 23.

man's being are involved, it is observed that for every change in the bodily organization there is a corresponding change in the soul; that affections of the nervous system lead invariably to modifications in thought and feeling, and that ideas and volitions originating in the mind are at once expressed in terms of bodily activity and power. The relation is continuous from the first signs of consciousness to the last, and it is of the most intimate and ineffable character. True, the same science that takes our profound practical experience of the marvelous intimacy of body and soul, and works it over into the established opinion that changes in the one are invariably accompanied by changes in the other, tells us, with the utmost candor and emphasis, that the concurrent activities are, so far as has been observed, only concurrent. They are utterly untranslatable the one into the other. No wise disputant upon this subject will be disposed to quarrel with the statements of

science as to the intimacy of body and mind. Self-observation and reflection give one a far profounder sense of that intimacy than any experiment conducted upon another can. So long as the activities of body and mind are not held to be identical, it is impossible to overstate the intimacy. Every exposition of the unsearchable closeness of the human spirit to the physical organization which it fills but serves to make one aware of the mysterious order of man's life. No believer in the unity and permanence of the soul need question, no believer can question, the soundness of Aristotle's statement, that mind is the perfection of the body as sight is the perfection of the eye.<sup>1</sup> No comparison less strong and extreme can adequately express the truly ineffable relation between the inward man and the outward.

<sup>1</sup> *De Anima*, ii. 1, 9. This comparison Aristotle does not extend to the creative reason, that in man which makes him a thinking being. An adequate modern exposition of the great thinker at this point would be of extreme interest.



Organization, then, is essential to the expression of mind ; to the unbeliever it seems essential to the existence of mind. For it we wait in the darkness of the prenatal state, for it we linger in the incapable wonder of infancy ; and when in youth and manhood it is ours, we feel as if with its development we had found ourselves. Then the turn comes, and the bodily organization declines. Sight grows dim, hearing becomes thick, taste indifferent, and all the vital powers begin to live beyond their income. Bankruptcy comes at last, and with the failure of heart and flesh the last ray of intelligence vanishes. The fact would seem to be, so it is held, that not only is organization essential to mind, but also that this particular organization, this present body, is essential. Transfer from the earthly house of this tabernacle to the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, would appear to be an impossibility. Thus it comes to pass that from identity of fortune throughout life,

from coincidence of activity, and from the manifest dependence of the mind upon the material organism for the expression of its power, it is assumed, or concluded, that the dissolution of the body is the extinction of the soul. It is, finally, the apparent indispensableness to mental life of the particular organization that we call a man's body, that makes it impossible for so many to believe in the immortality of the soul. The famous remark, attributed to Socrates, "God may forgive sin, but I do not see how he can," is not strong enough to serve the purposes of negative thought upon this question. It is admitted that the Creative Power may be able to secure the survival of the soul after the brain has become fixed in death, but the difficulty of so thinking is held to be so great that the only reasonable conclusion is its practical impossibility.

## V

### *Value of the Evidence for Denial*



IT now becomes necessary to review the evidence presented for the belief that the soul cannot survive the death of the body. And as a preliminary, it should be remarked that the difficulty of seeing through the case to a positive faith is precisely what constitutes it a problem. If there were no coincident growth and decline of mind and body, no interdependence, no community of fortune, and no close and unsearchable connection between them, there would be no problem. The statement of these admitted facts is only, as the lawyers say, the putting in of the case. Argument is deferred, interpretation and judgment come later. Whenever, therefore, the facts previously enumerated about the in-

terrelation of the soul and the body appear conclusive against hope, it must be borne in mind that this is simply prejudgment. The sense of difficulty created by the facts merely means, in the first instance, that faith in immortality has become a problem. If there were no dark and distressing side to human existence, if there were no difficulties in the way of belief, there would be no room for debate.

But if some subtraction must be made from the apparent weight of evidence against hope, on the ground that only thus is the question raised to serious importance, a further and perhaps larger deduction is necessary, owing to the activity in the matter of sense and imagination. The blow on the head which is followed by instantaneous loss of mental expression, the whiff of ether that carries the patient into apparent absolute insensibility, the accident that turns the man of genius into an imbecile for the remainder of his days, the slow decay of the physical frame, and the

corresponding disappearance of intellectual power, mightily affect feeling. The senses take in such situations with abnormal intensity. The impression, powerful at the time, becomes a permanent memory ; and the tragic poet, implicit in every man, here finds the suitable and stimulating material for the construction of the lurid drama that, after life's fitful fever, lays the weary and heavy laden to rest in the dreamless and eternal slumber of the grave. Men still fear death as children fear to go into the dark. The impression upon the sensibility is inevitable, and at first imagination is but the slave of sense. There is no moral blame in the matter ; nor is there any immediate and universal remedy. The sensuous feelings are slow to surrender ; they are dull scholars ; they hold out against truth, not, indeed forever, but for a long time. The thing to be noted, however, is that in these feelings there is no argument against immortality, nor do they imply any real application of reason to the

problem. To dispose of the question by feeling and imagination is to fail to carry it to the only satisfactory tribunal. At no time is Butler stronger than when he contends that the influence of imagination, more than anything else, makes men torture death into the destruction of the human spirit.

To this must be added, as far as the senses are concerned, the unobviousness of the other side. The psalmist said that he cried unto God out of the depths, and that God heard him. Nowhere but in the depths can the fundamental truths of the world be found. If men, in the mass, are incapable of profound thinking, profound living is open to all ; and in the unobvious realms below the surface the great discoveries are made, and nowhere else. The process of knowledge that testifies so mightily to the unity of the mind is subtle and many miss it. The value of the ideal is not quoted in the markets of the world, and multitudes remain insensible to it.

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The ethical illumination of experience and the moral trend of history are not obvious truths, and so are unacknowledged by vast numbers of the race. The capacity of man for fellowship with the Infinite and the philosophy of the religious life are matters not for sensational impression, but for thought ; and, in a word, the kingdom of heaven, that institute of the Eternal Spirit which includes the ideals, the values, the fellowships, and the hopes of humanity at its best and in its highest interpretation, does not come with observation. The evidence for man's immortality is not in the earthquake, nor in the tempest, nor in the fire, but in the still small voice. And upon the world at large, which is very hard of hearing, that voice has but little power. If it were possible, which it is not, to make the considerations that support belief in the endless life of the soul as obvious as the impressions of sense and as palpable as the repetition of the lurid and terrible in imagination, it is believed that

they would absolutely control the conviction of mankind. So accessible to dramatic situation and coloring are the majority of men, and so insensible to thought.

We come now to the final question between belief and unbelief. What is the nature of the organization upon which the mind is said to be completely dependent? Professor Goldwin Smith assumes that it is now clear that the soul is not a unity in itself, but the name for the higher and finer activity "of our general frame."<sup>1</sup> Upon a momentous question it is not altogether satisfactory to think like a philosopher with one lobe of the brain, and like the vulgar with the other. Like a philosopher Professor Smith tells us what the soul is. It is "the higher and finer activity of our general frame." But what he means by the phrase "our general frame" he does not say. This, however, as Berkeley has shown, and after him John Stuart Mill, and every other thinker who has gone

<sup>1</sup> *The Forum*, July, 1896, p. 610.



to the heart of the matter, is the fundamental question at issue. And if one is to allow the great thinkers of mankind to mould one's general thought of the material universe, one cannot but be influenced by their work at this particular point. Since speculation escaped its infancy, the world of matter has been generally held to be, in one form or another, an idealism. It is everywhere admitted that the material universe is not what it seems to be to the ordinary mind. In the process of analysis it is transformed into the permanent possibility of sensations with Mill, into the Unknowable Power with Spencer, into the Infinite Spirit with Berkeley, and into the manifestation of the Absolute by a whole procession of German thinkers. If the analysis is but thorough and consistent and intelligible, everything material dissolves at last in the Universal Will, as the falling snowflakes melt into the current of the stream. Matter becomes the popular name for force, force the scientific name

for will, and will the philosophical explanation, guided by the analogy of the human personality, of the universe in space and time.

Now when a surgeon looks in upon the brain of a patient, what is the nature of that upon which he looks? He sees something; he can touch something; he can investigate and operate upon something. Popularly it is understood that he is dealing with a substance foreign to the thinking principle within. But can the surgeon get beyond sight and touch? Is he not investigating and operating in a world of mind? And can he say anything further of the object before him than that it gives rise to his peculiar mental life at the moment, and that he possesses the power of inducing modifications in it? If the universal matter of the ordinary mind is a myth, the material body is a myth. The particular specimen of the outward universe, the human body, must follow the example, take on the character, and share

the fate of the whole. It seems unaccountable that the philosophy which derives its life from Hume, and which dissolves the outward world into a series of sensations, should erect the human body, which is, according to the theory, but a given specimen of that world, into a material organism upon whose life the existence of the soul is wholly dependent. Thinking of this sort is either the mad inconsistency or the base hypocrisy of the philosophy in question.

We have thus seen that another man's body is but the condition of sensational life to the surgeon. We now ask, What is the surgeon's body to himself? It cannot be the material organism of the ordinary mind, for material organism of that sort there is none anywhere. It can be no other than a form of mind, an attachment in the service of the human spirit from its Maker, a source of mental nutrition, an order which operates as receptivity when spoken to from without, and which acts as

the medium of expression when addressed from within. The body is thus transformed into an order of feelings, the soul into an order of thought, and both into an order of mind. Our human universe is a dualism. It is composed of sense and of thought, and these two are in conjunction. The universe of sense has its law and necessity, and it claims the order of sense that constitutes man's body as its subject; the universe of thought has its character and power, and it claims the order of thought that constitutes the soul as its servant. The deepest account, so far as it appears, that any man can give of his body is that it is a form of his consciousness. It enters into his consciousness, conditions it, serves it, affects it in a thousand ways; but still it is no machine in the revolving wheels of which the spirit can alone live. It is a form of his personality that comes and goes. The great note of the sense-universe to which the body belongs is change; the great mark of the

personal universe is permanence. And, therefore, it may well be that the body, the sensuous concomitant of the spirit, passes utterly away at what is called death, according to the law of its order; and that according to the law of its order the personality abides. It should be added that since it is the sensational philosophy that is the usual basis for the denial of the immortality of man, inasmuch as, according to that philosophy, there is no necessary connection, no causal relation between the series of feelings called the body and the series called the soul, a mere concomitance, however striking, a bare association however constant, cannot be held as evidence that the spiritual member of the fellowship may not exist when the other member has been withdrawn. How clearly John Stuart Mill saw this is evident from these words: "The relation of thought to a material brain is no metaphysical necessity, but simply a constant coexistence within the limits of observation. And when analyzed

to the bottom . . . the brain, just as much as the mental functions, is, like matter itself, merely a set of human sensations either actual or inferred as possible. Experience furnishes us with no examples of any series of states of consciousness without this group of contingent sensations attached to it ; but it is as easy to imagine such a series of states without as with this accompaniment, and we know of no reason in the nature of things against the possibility of its being disjoined.”<sup>1</sup>

The conclusion to which one would seem to be forced upon this question of organization is that the body is a section of the total human consciousness, that it is a section which fluctuates greatly during the present life, and that as an inconstant part of the personality it may pass utterly away, and still leave the personality itself in full vigor and open to new and superior opportunities. Science can show nothing more than concurrence of activity on the part

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on Religion*, pp. 199, 200.

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of body and soul. Human life is a chariot drawn by two horses, and when one drops it does not follow that the other ceases to exist. Some embarrassment may be occasioned by the break, and some delay; yet in the resources of the universe it is not hard to believe that another mate has been provided, in anticipation of the need. At least, nothing in the known relation of the mind and the body appears to contradict that vast and inspiring hope.

## VI

### *Postulates of Immortality*



THE denial of immortality is the creed that constructs itself out of certain aspects of human life. Those aspects have been considered, and it has appeared that the facts do not seem to warrant the dismal interpretation put upon them. In passing now from the negative side to the positive, from a review of the denial to a consideration of the affirmation of man's immortality, it must be understood that we are going, not from science to faith, but from one form of belief, which has been shown to be premature, to another which is held to be valid, persistent, and, all things considered, inevitable. Since science is dumb upon the question, the belief in immortality seeks its premise from philosophy. The con-



struction of that premise may seem to delay unreasonably the conclusion, but the delay is not really unreasonable. For it is only as an inference from a given interpretation of the universe that belief in the future life can defend itself. The belief stands or falls with the moral idea of the universe. That idea is its necessary presupposition, and that idea at its best provides the strongest foundations for hope. A more consistent expression than has generally prevailed of the moral conception of the universal order under which men live is an indispensable preliminary in this discussion.

The three grand positions from which faith in a hereafter for man would seem to follow are the moral perfection of the Creator, the reasonableness of the universe, and the worth of human life. The three are at heart one; for if the first is true, if God is absolutely good, the other two must follow. Still a few words upon each one of the three may tend to clearness.

That a Supreme Mind orders and governs all things may be held to be capable of demonstration. The natural and sane operation of the human intellect conducts irresistibly to this conclusion. It is, indeed, impossible to survey the earth and the heavens, to note the countless orders of life below, and the everlasting march of splendors on high; to regard the uniform and marvelous operation of law in things the least significant, and in things the most sublime; to behold everywhere the signs of unity, individuals running into families, families into societies, societies into kingdoms, and kingdoms moving to their concordant places within the same circle of being; to dwell upon the evidence that men are living, not in a chaos, but in a cosmos, not amid infinite miscellaneousness, but in an ordered and real universe;—it is impossible to allow all these judgments their legitimate impression upon the mind, and still resist the belief in a supreme and all-controlling In-

telligence. When Bacon says that he would rather believe all the fables in the Legend, and in the Talmud, and in Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind, he is giving expression to the scientific understanding ; he is the prophet of the sane intellect everywhere.

It cannot, however, be maintained that the absolute goodness of the Creator is demonstrable. The complete induction of the facts accessible to man would show wonderful devices for joy in the living world, unimagined sources of zest even in the stern side of existence, and amazing adjustments in man's environment for the production of heroic and splendid character. Still, when all this has been said, there will remain a large residuum of unaccountable distress, and, what is more serious, an order that does not discriminate between the just and the unjust. The converse to the sublime fact that God makes his sun shine upon the evil and the good, and his rain fall upon the just

and the unjust, is supplied in the famous line, —

“Here’s a night  
That pities neither wise men nor fools.”

The belief in the absolute goodness of God is an assumption, an assumption, indeed, without which men cannot live, but still an assumption, that is, a belief for which there is proof, but not demonstrative proof. The logical impulse impels to this belief, for thus it becomes possible to account for all the good in the world, and to hope for a good issue from all the apparent evil. The disinterestedness of a Moses; the passionate devotion of an Isaiah; the self-effacement and heroism of a Paul; the reforming zeal and courage for righteousness of a Luther; the burning love of the saints of the earth, in all ages, among all peoples, and under the forms of all religions; the moral integrity, the patient endurance, and pious humanity of the great majority of those by whom the world has been kept alive and carried for-

ward, and, above all, with us in this part of the globe, the sublime character of Jesus Christ, compel one to think of the Infinite as at least good enough to account for this amazing total of human goodness. For it is certain that it could not have originated or persisted or perfected itself against the purpose or without the sympathy of the Creator.

One is also guided by the moral impulse to the great conclusion that God must be perfectly good. Men thus honor the deepest and most venerable instinct in the human heart.

“ Shall mortal man be more just than God ?

Shall a man be more pure than his Maker ? ” <sup>1</sup>

Here is the final moral incredibility. Almost as strong is the expression of Plato's ethical passion, “ God is in no way whatever unrighteous, but he is righteous in the highest possible degree ; and nothing is more like him than the one of us who shall become supremely just. ” <sup>2</sup> It is a

<sup>1</sup> Job iv. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Theæt.* 176 C.

reasonable conscience that makes cowards of us all. One of the aboriginal and indestructible sentiments of humanity speaks in the great words, —

“I dare do all that may become a man ;  
Who dares do more is none.”

There is a moral law or instinct in man, inalienable from his being, which he cannot override and remain man. It would seem that this feeling that God must be wholly good should remain inviolable, and that it should be ruler among all human thoughts. It is not simply the religious impulse, but also the fundamental ethical constitution of mankind that speaks in Whittier's faith, —

“The wrong that pains my soul below,  
I dare not throne above.”

That “dare not,” coming as it does, not from the basest but from the best in man, rightfully and mightily supports the conclusion that God is good.

The necessities of worship plead for the

same thing. The mood of homage to the Eternal is confessedly the highest in man, and it is plainly impossible for intelligent man unless he is able to behold in God absolute moral perfection. The absoluteness of devotion, the fervor and sublimity of the homage, expressed in the great words, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," is unattainable except by those who are forever assured of the perfect integrity of the Divine Being. The insight obtained into the Divine method of educating the human spirit, through the higher moods of worship and the confidences established, all flow from the august assumption that the soul is dealing with a Being of utter rectitude and love. The logical impulse that finds good in the works of God's hands, and often, as in the moral leaders of mankind and in the Master of the Christian world, immeasurable good, conducts to faith; the moral instinct that holds it blasphemy to think the creature juster and purer than the Creator impels yet more

powerfully to the same conclusion ; finally, the necessities of worship, and all the refinement and strength that come to man's spirit by means of it, mightily support this belief.

The belief in the moral perfection of God is an assumption for which there is proof, but by no means complete proof. Its deepest justification is that it is the assumption without which human life cannot be understood ; without which the ideals, the higher endeavors, the best character and hope of man, are unaccountable and insane. As F. D. Maurice said a generation ago, assume the answering Reality to the first words of the Lord's prayer, " Our Father, who art in heaven," and the total of human history becomes intelligible. If scientific suppositions are justified by the completeness of their working, so here the order and hope that flow from the first and sublimest of assumptions would seem to be a vindication that cannot be impugned. And it need hardly be added that if God



is the Father of men, endless life must follow. If there is a real relation between the Divine conscience and heart and the conscience and heart of man, it must be a permanent relation. God cannot be conceived as wise and good at the same time that he is believed to extinguish human life at death. Both beliefs cannot be entertained ; one or the other must prevail. If death is the end, God cannot be thought of as good ; if God is thought of as infinitely good, death cannot be the end.

The second position from which faith in the endless life strengthens itself is the reasonableness of the universe. One great note of the order amid which men live is that it is an order. It is the expression of intelligence. The universe invites to study, reveals its secret to the devoted mind, wins the intellect by the highest of promises, the possession of the truth, into the open vision of at least part of its ways. The order under which he lives inspires the reason of man, incites to philosophic reflec-

tion, fills the spirit with the passion for unity, elicits in the intelligence the ideal of an intelligible world. And this ideal of the universe as intelligible is the most fundamental and the most practical of all our purely intellectual conceptions. The arm of science would be paralyzed at once if the idea should come to abide that the outward world is a hopeless chaos. Astronomy, geology, biology, physiology, psychology, ethics, political economy, history, and all science whatever would die equally with philosophy if the reasonableness of the universe should be denied or seriously doubted. One can imagine a race of creatures enacting an immense drama, immense for them, on the exterior of a soap bubble. One can picture their works of science and art and philosophy; their sense of the bubble's physical properties and relations, their expression of its resplendent beauty as it floats in the sunlight, their comprehension of its bearing toward the ultimate reality. And one can see that if

these infinitesimal creatures should come to the conclusion that their abode was a mere bubble and nothing more, something isolated from all being, and leading through the comprehension of it to no universe beyond, it would be impossible for the scientific, artistic, and philosophic impulses in them to remain living and fruitful. This must be one of the many meanings of that profound remark of Goethe, that only the believing ages are the fruitful ages. That the universe is throughout intelligible, that it may be understood, one part by another, and progress made through the part upon the whole, and that when understood it will be found rationally satisfactory, is the fundamental assumption of the intellectual exertion of the world. And if it is plain that God cannot be regarded as infinitely good, if he denies to virtue the "glory of going on and still to be," it is equally obvious that if death be the end of man the ideal of the universe as throughout reasonable is vain. The

hopes of knowledge and of goodness, the sense of a prophetic human fellowship, and the expectation of a life concordant with the life of the universe are contradicted ; and the movement that began and that received fresh momentum from day to day, from faith in the world as reasonable, is turned back upon itself, and all things are rolled in everlasting confusion. The believer in the reasonableness of the order under which he lives must not be put to shame ; otherwise the belief will be surrendered. Death as a finality is the demonstration of the delusion of belief in the universe as intelligible. For it is man's universe that in the first place is supposed to be intelligible ; not the absolute universe, whatever that may mean. And a universe that defeats his best life, that contradicts his deepest thought, cannot be considered, by man at least, as the expression of Supreme Reason.

The worth of human life to the Creator depends, of course, upon his character.

If one is permitted to construe the universe through human personality, and unless one shall take his stand in blank agnosticism one can do no other, the best thing to be done is to continue the process and interpret the Ultimate Character through its highest historic expression. Humanity has a better right, surely, to claim to be the regulative revelation of the character of the Infinite than the orders beneath it can possibly have. And it is humanity at its best that says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."<sup>1</sup> The worth of human life to such a God is beyond dispute. It must be of permanent value, not only in those solitary instances where it becomes the flowering of moral beauty and disinterested service, but also in our total humanity so long as the bare possibility of noble character continues. If the Supreme Being loves goodness, the naked capacity for it must lay hold of his conserving power. And therefore one is

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 9.

ready for an expression of God's moral interest in mankind infinitely wider than that to which one has been accustomed. For the difficulty once surmounted of the relation of the soul to the body, the great obstacle to faith in the permanence of the human spirit is the extremely limited expression that has been allowed to the moral interest of God in the race. It must be clear that if one is thrown back for the ground of a given belief upon the character of the Creator, then only upon the widest possible disclosure of that character, and the largest and most consistent thought concerning it, can one find the most assured basis for faith. The appeal in behalf of the permanence of man is ultimately away from all matters of physical organization, to the heart of the universe, to the Absolute conscience and pity that are believed to have dominion over all things. The freshest discussion of the immortality of man, therefore, must consider it with reference to what may be

termed the new theodicy; that is, upon the faith that God exists a morally perfect being, what is the full logic of this position in a consideration of the probable destiny of man? If that faith is to continue in the earth, it must provide a field for the expression of God's moral interest in the race commensurate with his character. There is no other way open for the reconciliation of the actual and the ideal. The sincerity of the Divine intention in seeking this reconciliation, his unrestricted opportunity, and the infinity of his resources, must be put beyond the possibility of doubt. So much, at least, the faith in his absolute goodness necessitates. It is true that many profound and believing men to-day abhor all theodicies. The sense of the mystery of human existence is so deep that all attempts to carry even a single line of light to its heart seem fore-ordained to failure. The unfathomable depths of human suffering appear to be forever beyond the plummet of the explor-

ing reason, and the shadow that lies upon the universe is too heavy to be mitigated by man's thought, however luminous. Men of this type prefer silence upon the ultimate problems. Still they live in the aboriginal moral sentiments of their kind, and their scorn for theodicies is the scorn of those who through feeling have transcended their difficulty. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" That is the bold challenge of those to whom reference is here made. The problem which human history raises when placed in the presence of God is shattered by the explosion of a tremendous moral instinct. The instinct is precious, and its power is great. Let it continue to clothe itself in the noble words attributed to the first Hebrew face to face with Sodom and the Infinite, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" But this belief formed by the interior play of moral feeling becomes a vast premise for rational insight. The question is not between a theodicy and no



theodicy, but between a theodicy implicit and a theodicy explicit. Moral feeling holds in solution the sublimest vindication of the ways of God to man, and for those who long to add vision to passion it cannot be other than a service to life to seek for the intellectual content of the highest ethical sentiments. If any one desires to renew his confidence in the greatness possible to a theodicy, let him turn again to the second book of Plato's Republic. He will there find a theodicy in behalf of righteousness without which it is impossible to be an honorable man. And until the fundamental belief in the absolute goodness of God is pressed to the conclusions to which it inevitably leads, the weight upon those who are bearing the heat and burden of the day must remain too heavy to be borne.

## VII

### *Illogical Limitations*



SINCE absolute moralism or a universe supremely and everlastingly devoted to moral ends is the grand basis of belief in a future life for man, it is necessary to consider briefly the various ideas of limitation that have been held concerning God's interest in mankind. These ideas, properly understood, mean a restriction upon the moral purpose of God and the moral character of his universe. The more widely they prevail, the more difficult do they make belief in a hereafter for the human soul. For whenever the ultimate appeal as to what is or as to what will be is taken to the supreme moral conception, it follows that only the noblest views, only the judgments that are in profoundest accord with their standard, can

be true. If the origin, career, and destiny of mankind are to be interpreted in accordance with the sublime assumption of the moral perfection of God, only those ideas can be valid which are consistent with that assumption. In a profound sense in this sphere, morality creates and immorality destroys its object. The supreme moral conception tells us what God must be if he is to be at all; and it denies the rights of God to any being whose purpose and government fall below its own standard. Sheer, bare almightiness cannot constitute its possessor the object of human accountability and veneration. Nor can omniscience raise a being to that sovereign elevation. The absolute character alone justifies absolute authority; the ultimate source of all power and all obligation is the supreme love. The battle of belief and unbelief must finally be settled upon this field. The believer must purge his faith as Gideon did his army; he must exalt the whole series of conceptions that go to form

it ; he must work it over into a pure and consistent moralism, into a scheme that begins and ends in the perfect love of God. Anything less than this outside the sheltered fold of traditional orthodoxy has already become incredible. Anything less than philosophical loyalty to the absolute moralism of Jesus Christ handicaps faith hopelessly, gives skeptical thought an immense advantage, manufactures obstacles against its own success, and indeed creates the forces that ultimately make its progress impossible. As unbelief must be pushed into full consistency, as it must be stripped of the alleviations that come from poor logic and from the associations of faith that have gone to form the better spirit of the unbeliever, as negative thought must be shown as at last atheistic thought, and this type of thinker must be compelled to do battle for his convictions from the position of absolute pessimism, so the antagonistic view of the world, the vision of belief, must be lifted

into the completest attainable correspondence with the supreme historic mind, the mind of Christ. Only thus can men see where they are and what they are facing ; only thus can the true nature of the contest be determined, and the issues on the one side and on the other be decisively discerned.

It is usual to discredit the view that holds to the unlimited moral interest of God in mankind by applying to it the evil epithet of universalism. But universalism is not raised as a question of fact by the position above taken, but only, if at all, as matter of inference, and that, too, in a region where inferences can never become more than hopes. In a root and branch discussion the philosophical and the homiletical interests must not be confounded. If all men were philosophers, the two interests would be seen to be identical, but all men are not philosophers. Still the fundamental problem of speculative theology and preaching is the same. It concerns the charac-

ter of God ; and nothing, in the long run, can strengthen the arm of moral appeal that is not warranted by the highest conception of the Divine character. It is this conception that is now under discussion, and the full logic of which it is deemed desirable to employ in vindication of belief in the immortality of man. To try to discredit it by the cry of universalism is to mistake the issue. Universalism is a doctrine that has to do with matters of fact, that contends that, as a matter of fact, all men will finally be saved. The position above taken concerns God's relation to mankind, inquires after his disposition toward the human race, and from the assumption that he is a Being absolutely good concludes as to what must be the scope of his moral purpose.

The only alternative to this final appeal to the moral reason of man, qualified for its task of judgment by long discipline in the school of Christ, the sovereign moral teacher, is the complete abdication

of thought. As the uneducated mind believes that the outward world is what it appears to be, colored, sounding, fragrant, and solid, as it believes that grass is green, the sky blue, the flower beautiful, the mountain a mass of rock, independent of the mind that considers, so there are those who find the standard of religious belief in the accepted traditions of the world. Whatever their name or denomination, wherever they sojourn, their true home is in the Roman church. The realm of no-reason is their dwelling-place, and the church of mere will-worship must continue to be their sanctuary. That agnostics should become Romanists seems to certain writers strange; the truth is that when religious feeling takes possession of these men they can logically become nothing else. Their moral reason still remains incompetent to discover or to justify the supreme object of religious feeling, or the manner in which that object should be worshiped. Nothing remains for the poor

agnostic who has had the misfortune to become devout but to fall back upon tradition and accept the contents of faith on authority. It is devout agnosticism that to-day is becoming the mother of a menacing institutionalism that is exerting itself to install over the religious mind extreme high churchism. Let it be understood that the movement originates and derives all its vigor from the acknowledged incompetence of the moral reason of man to fix the object of his worship, and Protestants will see the alternative that divides the field against them with atheism.

The first grand form of limitation upon the moral interest of God in mankind is presented in the Hebrew idea of the remnant. No blame, intellectual or moral, attaches to Isaiah in consequence of this idea. It was the best that he could do, even under special inspiration, amid the mad condition of the times in which he lived. He held in his heart of hearts the faith in the victorious future of Israel



upon this earth, and at the same time he saw her utterly unworthy of her high calling and completely incapable of advancing upon it. What remained was simply to look upon history as the operation of the moral judgment of God, destroying unworthy Israel, like a doomed tree, and when the evil growths were cut down and burned, feeding the hopes of the future upon the fresh sprouts sent up from the living roots. This was the way in which the greatest of the Hebrew prophets met the problem springing from the sublime faith and the terrible history of his nation. He could not surrender the faith, and he could not recognize in the actual nation the true nation. There was for Isaiah but one way out of the difficulty. The unworthy nation shall be destroyed; the worthy remnant shall abide, and from this a new, holy, and victorious people shall come, in whom the original purpose of God will be realized.

This is a theodicy independent of a fu-

ture world. It is a theodicy exclusively for Israel. It is a theodicy according to which the nation as a whole perishes, and only the remnant survives. It is a justification of the ways of God with Israel which involves a tremendous miscarriage of the Divine purpose. It was the best that even transcendent spiritual genius could at that time achieve, but as applied to Israel it is utterly incredible as a statement of the whole truth; and when applied to the nations of the earth contemporary with Israel, and to the teeming millions of the entire historic and prehistoric periods of human life, it becomes monstrous. If it is a true description of the Divine method with humanity, it must break down all confidence in the power and goodness of God. If it is anything more than a half truth, a merely introductory statement preparing the way for the larger truth, it excludes all idea of a future life for man, and it makes intelligent trust in the Creator impossible.

One cannot avoid the feeling that a cer-

tain injustice is done a great spiritual leader by isolating one of his ideas from its context, and by giving it an application which perhaps he never meant to give to it. It may be that as a doctrine for this world it was subordinate in his thought to some larger conception for whose utterance he might have felt that the times were not ripe. Still the idea of the salvation of the remnant accords so well with the doctrine of the survival of the fittest, and with other theories of limitation about to be mentioned, that, even at the risk of seeming to do dishonor to a permanent inspirer of men, it is necessary to show the total inconsistency of one of his conceptions, when converted into a finished philosophy of history, and made to cover the entire career of man with the belief in the moral perfection of God. No believer in the salvation of a remnant only can show the slightest ground in moral reason for belief in anything that is worth believing.

This leads to the church doctrine of elec-

tion which still stands in many of the popular creeds, and which is taught in nearly all the theological systems from Augustine to Shedd. Again, it must be said that with the conditions which these thinkers imposed upon themselves it was impossible to do other than they did. To those who believed that one text of Scripture carried as much authority as another, a restricted theory of salvation was a necessity. Where criticism of the contents of the Bible was forbidden, where the determination of all Biblical truth by the absolute moralism of Christ was not insisted upon, where it was incumbent upon the believer to construct his creed from the whole body of the Scriptures, any other conclusion than that at which he arrived was out of the question. The patristic Augustine, the reformer Calvin, and the puritan Edwards were each like a Samson shorn of his strength trying to defy the Philistines. The conditions made successful resistance hopeless from the start.

And there are few sadder or more tragic scenes in the history of the higher thought of the world than the spectacle of these mighty thinkers, sightless in the presence of the most fundamental of all the moral problems of man, grinding in the prison of the great adversaries of faith, and thus contributing to the support of the unbelief against which they had contended all their lives. The memory of the heroic character, by which it will be found at last that they slew more than by all their deftly constructed orthodoxies, does indeed soften regret for their errors, and confers upon them a clear title to grateful and everlasting remembrance. They are here referred to as the great advocates of the theological doctrine of election, a doctrine which destroys the grand premise for belief in the immortality of man, because it makes the conception of the moral perfection of God empty and incredible. The sorest injustice to the thinkers named above is done, not by those who practice upon them

a wise selection and a reasonable rejection, but by those who perpetuate their errors ; errors for which it is easy to find palliating circumstances in the case of the masters, but for which, in the conditions of their disciples of to-day, there can be no valid excuse. Election as it has prevailed, and as it is to be feared it still prevails in many places, — election and faith in a moral Deity are conceptions mutually and eternally exclusive.

The form which the ancient idea of the limitation upon God's interest in man most frequently bears in our time is that of opportunity of salvation for this life only. Character for eternity is fixed in time. In this way it is thought a grander earnestness will attach itself to human endeavor, a more solemn and tremendous importance to the present opportunity. The motives which have led to the restriction of the moral opportunity for man to this world have been, in many cases at least, of the noblest character. They have been, in

the first instance, motives of fidelity to the Bible and its teachings ; and in the second, they have risen out of the passionate desire to guard the interests of righteousness. The mistake of the position was twofold. The Bible was made for man, not man for the Bible ; and the book must be made subservient to the Christian interests of life. The other mistake was in supposing that the strenuousness of existence which the view in question sought to guard, and the idea of righteousness which it justly held to be supreme, were in mortal peril under the protection of any other view. Those who refuse to limit the grace of God to this world believe that righteousness is its own safeguard, and that in consequence human life retains its strenuousness, made all the more impressive because fired by a new confidence in God and a larger hope for mankind.

It must now be said that a doctrine that confines the moral opportunity of man to this life undermines faith in the moral

character of God. To say that the Creator has a supreme moral interest in human beings, that he is full of compassion for them, and offers to help them into the way of righteousness during the brief and uncertain period of their existence upon this earth, but that after death his mood is one of unalterable mercilessness toward all the failures in time, and that the environment of the future is so constructed as to make the desire for ethical improvement — supposing it to exist, which is not at all unlikely — eternally ineffectual, is to destroy forever the moral idea of God. Nor are alleviations of this dismal hypothesis at all sufficient ; such as the provision of a future chance for those who have had no Christian opportunity upon earth. That makes a bad conception a trifle less incredible, but no more. It does not meet the question, What does the perfect and immutable character of God, as the Creator and Father of men, necessitate in his relation to the race? The question is not what men



deserve, but what God's honor demands. The old theology, which is always to be distinguished from the old religion and emphatically from the Christian religion, was full of shuffle and sophism here. It contended for the eternal willingness of God to save; threw the blame upon the lost; and all the while it knew perfectly well that the willingness of man to accept salvation is the final outcome of the willingness of God to bestow it. The theory in question draws a circle, larger or smaller as the case may be, within which, at most, is gathered an insignificant minority of the human beings who have lived upon the earth, over which the saving purpose of God extends, but beyond which to the countless millions who exist there he is compassionless and implacable. Now this is the same thing logically as to say that one can cut out a circle in space, within which the law of gravitation operates, and where the order and beauty that always follow may be beheld; but beyond which there is no grav-

itation, no law of space, and where nothing exists except chaos and utter contradiction. The answer to such a wild fancy would be that space is forever the same, that gravitation can be nowhere unless it is everywhere. And similarly the sufficient exposure of the illogical theory in question is contained in the bare statement that God is the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, who is without variableness or the shadow that is cast by turning. In all worlds God is the same, and his moral interest in men and his endeavor for them must be equal to the duration of their existence.

The unrelenting assertion of the theory of a probation for men for this life only, coupled with the declaration that without the knowledge of Jesus Christ salvation is impossible, has told tremendously upon the sublime inclination of human beings to trust their Maker. This sort of thinking and preaching has made men suspicious of the Supreme Being, has broken down the

great expectation which all souls naturally have from God, and has left them without the premise that is indispensable for faith in the future life — confidence in the character of the Eternal. The old theodicies, whether of the remnant, or election, or the restriction of moral opportunity to this life, rend asunder the ethical idea of God. They are like old forts, to be praised for the service they rendered in straitened days, and at the same time to be universally abandoned, as no longer of any use, except to the enemies of faith. Robert G. Ingersoll and others like him depend for their supplies upon a theory of the Bible which every enlightened believer has left behind him, and upon a philosophy of the Christian religion utterly discredited by the moral reason of man, and above all by the Christian religion itself.

## VIII

### *The New Humanity*



THE advent of the doctrine of evolution has done much to discredit old notions of the relation of God to mankind. The vista of humanity which it has opened to the mind of our time is so vast and bewildering that religious thinkers everywhere have felt compelled, as in the light of a further revelation of God, to reinterpret old beliefs. With the entire field of humanity fairly within sight, with even but an imperfect sense of the reach and fullness of the spaces that beings like ourselves have peopled, standing only in the early dawn of this wide and wondrous day, it has been found impossible to work the old ideas of limitation, whether remnant, election, or probation restricted to this life. For such minds the work of ref-

utation is already accomplished ; the new wine has burst the old wine-skins. No intelligent person who for an hour takes in the new situation, and allows it its legitimate influence upon the mind, can ever again support the traditional idea which limits God's saving interest in the race to this earth. A new humanity has arisen, in number exceeding the stars. It is too vast and noble to be consigned to perdition, unless all men are so consigned ; and it is too crude for any sphere except one full of incentives to progress. It is this new humanity that the religious thinker of to-day must reckon with, whose semi-brutal character and amazing capacities for ethical improvement he must equally acknowledge, and whom he must cover with the everlasting mercy of God.

It must further be observed that the goal of evolution has given new strength to hope. The cosmic process aims at the improvement of life, and when it fails here, as it has hitherto failed in the decided

ethical improvement of mankind in general, it need not be held that the failure is final. The purpose to lift life to its highest possible level, which is what the doctrine of natural selection means, need not be more, in the case of man, than a purpose temporarily defeated. There is nothing to forbid the supposition that the cosmic or Divine endeavor will be renewed upon another and happier field. The idea of an end toward which everything moves according to its kind is one full of the richest promise. Anything more than temporary defeat is too tremendous an accusation to bring against the universe, especially in the sphere of its highest endeavor, and in the case of its final product in time. The doctrine of final causes, the idea of ends, and the responsibility of the universe for their fulfillment, has gained new strength and impressiveness from evolution.

What may be termed the reversal of the method of animal evolution, when the process arrives at the character of human

beings, and which Dr. John Fiske has presented so strikingly in his "Destiny of Man," is another freshly open fountain of moral hope. The love of life, and the victorious struggle for it against countless enemies, which has been perhaps the main, although by no means the unmodified or only method of advance in the animal world, undergoes revision and even reversal, when evolution reaches the higher possibilities of the human race. The sense of justice upon which civilization depends, the sentiment of pity without which man cannot be man, the passion of love the sovereignty of which would mean the perfection of human character, call for the predominance of purposes that are other than self-regarding. If self-regarding purposes are still retained, as they ever must be, they are nevertheless transformed, and the self is no longer the isolated and Ishmaelish self whose hand is against every other hand, but the self that is in accord with the Universal Self, and whose perpetual

prayer is "Not my will, but thine, be done."

This new epoch, opened up by the beginning of the serious and more constant development of the moral life of the race, projects upon the horizon of the future the fairest hopes. The transfer is from a realm ethical only by anticipation, moral only by tendency and aspiration, to one where morality is the sovereign consideration. We are no longer in the flesh but in the spirit. Henceforth, having been lifted into the sphere of the spirit, into the order of a universe whose law is love, we are to discover, so far as we can, its character and scope, and to consider what pledges it gives concerning the destiny of mankind. And upon this level the very idea of development, as setting forth the universal method of the Creator, becomes prophetic. When man's ethical nature is reached, and where so much room and material for development exist, it would seem to be not a violent inference from evolution to suppose



that this world is but the first stage in the moral discipline of the race; that there are other worlds to follow where the discipline is continued, and that in the line of this consideration the magnificence of the old words appear : —

“ I have seen an end of all perfection,  
But thy commandment is exceeding broad.”<sup>1</sup>

If evolution is to be theistically employed, — and employed in no other way can it consistently be, — the amazing sense of humanity which it inspires must work freedom from inadequate notions of the relation of God to mankind, the goal at which it aims must create expectations of a renewed and successful endeavor for the race, the reversal of its method must open to faith a Divine universe, where the provision for the ascent of man is the old vision of Origen transfigured, of an infinite stairway of worlds reaching to the throne of God.

The main value, however, in the present

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxix. 96.

discussion of the doctrine of evolution is in forcing an alternative. The mass of humanity which it rolls into the field of vision is so great that the moral conception of the universe must either rise to meet the new emergency or perish. If the moral view of man's life shall insist upon identifying itself with theories of the remnant, election, or probation confined to this life, it is simply taking steps to destroy itself. For no man in his senses can survey the bewildering total of humanity that evolution puts before him, and admit that the saving interest of God in mankind ceases at death, and still believe that God is a moral being. It is either something other and infinitely better than this, or it is nothing. The moral view of the universe, by which is understood the utter righteousness and fatherly kindness of the Supreme Being, must fight for its life. To meet the necessities of the case presented by the new humanity, it must itself undergo evolution. It is for this

great service that the believer in God should be most grateful to evolution. It drives him back upon the deepest conception in his faith, it compels him to consider afresh the significance of the idea of righteousness, it forces him to an alternative. Either this world is a moral world, or it is not; if it is a moral world, the Creator's redeeming interest in mankind must continue forever. If the limitation put upon the Divine purpose by the Latin theology, and by what still passes among us in all denominations for orthodoxy, is true, every man who understands, in the least degree, the waste of life that this involves over the unmeasured expanses of time must abandon faith in the moral perfection of God. If this is true, men have no Father in heaven; if men have a Father in heaven, this is not true! One must either surrender as vain the moral view of the world, or, holding it as valid, take advantage of the irresistible logic of it, stake everything upon the full

and magnificent idea, and stand by a faith that fills the universe with light, the old faith that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 John i. 5.

## IX

### *The New Theatre for the Absolute Moral Purpose*



E are thus introduced to the new theatre of the Absolute Moral Purpose. The entire period of humanity upon this earth is covered by it; the total drama of man's existence in this world is the revelation of the beginning of God's endeavor to bring his sons home to glory. The universe in its total relation to man is a moral, or, if the term be preferred, a redemptive universe. As man's highest attainment is his hunger and thirst after righteousness, so the sublimest beatitude of God himself would seem to be the eternal passion to make righteousness sovereign over all his moral creatures. Man's field of service for time is the world; God's for eternity is the universe that he

has made, in so far as it is capable of sharing his life.

This view of the sphere of the Divine purpose is held as the inevitable conclusion from a consistent moral scheme of the universe; above all it is held as the sole logical issue of the absolute moralism of Jesus Christ. It is with the moral character of God, the moral order of the world, the moral condition and hope of man, the moral nature of his own mission, and the transcendent moral effect in history of his own career, that the mind of Christ is incessantly and absorbingly occupied. Everything is placed and everything is judged according to a sovereign moral conception, and the apostles who say that God is love are but giving epigrammatic expression to the entire body of their Master's teaching. It is this conception at its best, accepted directly from Christ the supreme master of it, that believers to-day are to handle against its great adversary, the conception of a universe indifferent to

the fate of its own highest achievements, and regardless of man in his origin, career, and destiny, without purpose and without heart, hurrying forward to the grave at express speed all the human life upon this planet, and drowning all in the abysses of eternal death.

It is not forgotten, and to obviate misunderstanding it is here and now recalled, that fine views do not necessarily make fine men, that a grand theological scheme does not of itself alone reconstruct bad character, transform wicked society, and institute the kingdom of God upon the earth. It is distinctly borne in mind and solemnly cherished, that the achievement of moral character by men and families and by human society at large involves a process of long continuance and of the utmost strenuousness. Seriousness in the presence of the momentous moral task of existence is the only permissible mood. Of that which has been from the beginning, both the shameful creation and the inex-

pressible affliction of mankind, of human sin, it is impossible to entertain views too profound, so long as we do not date it from the Eternal, nor make God responsible for its permanence. The way up from the animal condition into that of the perfected son of God remains an agony and a bloody sweat. Nothing can change that pathway of torture and tears, nothing can mitigate its iron and everlasting necessities. At the same time the struggling will desires to know whether the process is a reality, whether the sore travail is ever to come to the birth, whether the universe is for man or against him when he sets his heart upon the moral ideal. A creed is a necessity for human action; for it is simply the plan of campaign, with the sum of the motives that flow from it, which make struggle rational and the hope of victory possible. No creed at all paralyzes the will and eliminates it from the problem of living; a bad creed distorts the character and arrests the development of power; the



highest possible creed, the absolute moralism of Christ, gives the largest inspiration and the profoundest justification to the best thoughts and activities of man. The effort, therefore, to reach the better belief is always an effort in the interest of the better behavior.

It will also be found that the view here advanced upon philosophical grounds is not without wide support in the writings of the New Testament outside of the utterances of Christ. Some of the sublimest passages in the epistles of Paul are severely let alone, as leading the mind in unorthodox directions. The assertion of the universality of the Divine purpose in the eleventh chapter of Romans is seldom noted ; nor the Pauline pantheism in the fifteenth of the first letter to the Corinthians ; nor again the mighty faith that of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things.<sup>1</sup> The absoluteness of the moral views, the sovereignty of the Divine

<sup>1</sup> Romans xi. 36 ; Hebrews ii. 10.

universe expressed in these and similar passages, will yet create a literature more abundant and infinitely nobler than that which other sentences, isolated from them, and thus made to conflict with them, have generated. Students of the literary records of the teachings of Christ and his apostles should be slow to admit that the religion that has, as matter of history, created the moral view of the universe, can be rightfully employed to support limitations upon its sovereignty that destroy it altogether.

## X

### *Determinism and Freedom*



THE scheme here outlined may raise against itself the objection that it is a determinism in the interest of universal salvation. As to universal salvation, no scheme is to be identified with that doctrine simply because it faces that way, works toward it as an ultimate goal, and even hopes for such an issue from the moral travail of Christian history, unless it shall go a step farther and dogmatically affirm the restoration of all. The dogmatic assertion of the salvation of all men is universalism, as commonly understood, and nothing else is. The interest of the view maintained is concerned, not with matters of fact, not with things which the completed history of the world alone can determine, but

with purpose, aim, outlook, tendency, and legitimate hope. A protest is hereby entered, therefore, against the identification of the scheme here advanced with the doctrine known as universal salvation.

As to the charge of determinism, even if it were true, it is difficult to see how it should be theologically objectionable. Augustinianism, Calvinism, and Edwardeanism are all forms of determinism, and it is impossible to name any really great system of theology that is not open to the same characterization. The trouble with these schemes is not that they are forms of determinism, but that their determinism is of an objectionable kind. Where the purpose of God is held to control all things, as in these systems, and where that purpose secures eternal life for some before the foundations of the world, and permits eternal death for others from a similar antecedence in time, the remedy for the evil is not with the Arminian and the Wesleyan in the denial of the absolute-

ness of the Divine decree, but in the transformation of it into accord with the moral perfection of the Creator. Make the determinism universal, a fixed and inclusive purpose and movement for righteousness, a comprehensive device ceaselessly striving to realize itself in the life of the entire human race in this world and in all worlds, and reconstructed Augustinianism, or Calvinism, or Edwardeanism must remain forever in the best thought of mankind. The question at issue, so far as it concerns theology, is not between determinism and indeterminism, but between the moral and the immoral forms of that sovereign conception.

When the student approaches this subject from the side of philosophy, he has to bear in mind that the charge of fatalism may be brought, with considerable plausibility, against the system of every philosopher from Plato to Hegel. Whenever a thinker begins with the Universal, whenever the starting-point is found in the

Absolute, whenever the Divine plan of the universe, of human history, the course of nations, the fortune of families, the career of individuals, absorbs the philosopher, the explication of the grand movement of the idea is sure to open the way for the charge of fatalism. The assumption or the discovery of the Infinite, the finding and the working of the Divine plan for the dependent universe, will always wear the appearance of antagonism to the idea of human freedom.

But after all, appearance is not reality. And subtle, perplexing, ultimately insoluble although the problem of moral necessity and moral freedom may be, it is not the blank inconceivability that it is often represented as being. Determinism and freedom come near being but different sides of the same truth. The case in which this general statement may best be tested is the history of mankind. The problem before the mind of the Creator, let it be said, is the movement of the

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human race, from potential into actual and perfected manhood. The movement, so far as can be seen, is possible only on three assumptions: first, that God is Infinite Reason; second, that men are essentially and permanently reasonable beings; third, that the goal of the Divine purpose is the highest good of the race. Unless the movement is of the Eternal Reason upon beings essentially reasonable, for an end intrinsically good, it must be a movement without law, without justification, uncertain and vain. But beginning from these three suppositions, the reasonableness of God, of men in their essential character, and of the goal of history, it does not seem difficult to see that freedom is the same thing as rational necessity, that determinism is nothing other than the victorious march of the Divine persuasions in behalf of the highest good of mankind. Certainly, as matter of fact, the power to resist temporarily the Divine persuasions is lodged in man; but this is in conse-

quence of the irrationality that he has brought up with him from the animal world ; and in saying that it was fastened upon him by his Maker, the case for freedom is not even damaged. For the power to resist the immediate realization of the best wisdom of the world cannot surely be defined as the essence of freedom. This is simply the defect of man, the irrationality out of which come all the retarding forces in human society.

It is, no doubt, the entanglement of the rational and irrational in man that is the sore spot in the history of the race. The conjunction of the two in the human personality is the work of our Maker ; the early entanglement of the two is the outgrowth of that condition ; the chronic and extreme nature of the entanglement is due to the weakness of reason in man, to its failure to refresh itself from God, and build itself upon offered power into practical invincibility. The guilt of man is not primarily for his weakness, nor for



the wrong that is the issue of it ; but for the strength that he refuses to absorb, and for the right that he thereby fails to serve. Reason is self-conscious, open to the influence of the Infinite Reason, and with the purpose for the highest good which is native to it, forever present in it. But in man this rational character is in association with an irrational force, and hence the duel of human history. The presence and persistence of moral evil in the world is proximately due to the failure of the weak human reason to re-create itself out of the Eternal Reason.

However, to furnish final satisfaction upon the immense problem of the origin of moral evil is not the task of this essay. The question on hand is the nature of freedom as related to determinism. And it must be repeated that determinism simply means that, inasmuch as God is a reasonable Being, and proposes for man a reasonable good ; and inasmuch as man is essentially and permanently a reasonable

creature, it would appear that the Divine persuasions must be finally availing. It is therefore no other than the highest assertion of human freedom and the strongest warrant for the reality of it, to declare one's faith in the continuous progress of God's reasonable and glorious purpose for the race, and to hope and labor for its ultimate triumph. The triumph of God's purpose would mean the victory of righteousness over iniquity, the complete emancipation of man from the dominion of the irrational within him, the transformation of his entire personality into the unity and peace of reason, and the enrichment of that personality with the possession of the highest conceivable moral good.

In this process of transformation even the irrational is converted into a helper. It becomes the limit against which the reason pushes itself into clearer self-consciousness, the afflicting Philistine that rouses the inward Samson to moral hostility, the devil in hatred of whom the love of good-

ness swells to a passion. The force of antagonism is thus broken into the service of rational illumination. It is as when the rainbow appears. The white light, in its swift career, runs against the sharp edge of the dark cloud, and out flows the stream of living beauty, as from a celestial wound. And so long as God remains Eternal Reason, so long as man continues a reasonable being, and so long as his Maker proposes for him a reasonable good, and moves upon that good in the strength of Divine persuasions, moral necessity and moral freedom will mean but different names for the same reality.

## XI

### *The Verdict of the Infinite*



COME now to the ultimate position upon which belief in the immortality of man stands. That position is often little understood by the unbeliever. Whether he is right or wrong, the affirmative thinker believes that he has transcended himself, that he has gone over to the divine side of the universe, and that he has heard the verdict of the Infinite in favor of man. He lives in the progressive verification of the three great postulates of the endless life, — the moral perfection of God, the reasonableness of the universe, and the worth of existence. The explanation of his supposed discovery will serve to make plain the final ground of his belief ; at the same time it will be his best defense.

Probably the deepest wish of a serious mind, in regard to life after death, is for an outside, an unbiased, a higher and wholly competent judgment upon the question. The believer is afraid that because it is his own case he may not judge uprightly upon it. This is true of believing human opinion generally. There is at times a profound suspicion against its impartiality, against its honesty, against its competence. A lawyer does not expect from his excited client a judicial view of his own case. His interests have disturbed the balance of his mind, have spoiled the clearness of his vision. A statesman must often revise and sometimes reject the notion of the public good framed by his constituents. They have unwittingly identified their own welfare with that of the nation. It is not to be expected that they can take a disinterested view of the situation. And in the same way, a man thinking philosophically upon life after death begins to suspect the in-

tegrity of his own thoughts. His feelings are deeply involved in the question. He loves life, and he loves a few souls better than life. He would like to be able to believe that the goodly fellowships begun on earth are continued beyond the grave ; that the inspiring pursuit of the ideal here is permitted, under fairer conditions, in the hereafter ; that the aspiration for truth and beauty and character that gives dignity to the whole struggle in time is to be satisfied in the Eternal. But precisely because he wishes it he suspects his judgment. The worn faces of those from whom he drew his life, the cry of his children, the voice of youth, and the whole tenderness and prophetic beauty of human existence, appeal to him with so much power that he must decide in their favor.

And so a serious man desires to see himself as others see him, as the universe beholds him, as the Eternal regards him. He longs for a voice from the superhuman world, from the great outside, unbiased,

and Infinite Life. He feels that it would be an indescribable comfort if there were any way of interrogating the Almighty and of getting his judgment upon the case. He has become weary of his own thoughts ; he cries out for a word from God. And as the seer when surveying Israel, not on its best side, nor on its worst, but from the elevation where he could see the whole people, when he broke forth in blessings upon them, his outside and prophetic judgment must have been of great value ; so it would be an unspeakable satisfaction to man if some one could repeat to him the verdict of the Infinite upon human life.

Now this is precisely the intellectual attitude of faith. It believes that it has an assurance from the unseen, a judgment delivered from the other side, an opinion that is favorable, and at the same time final. It is essential that this position be clearly understood. Faith proclaims itself to be the immediate vision of its object. Its great beatitude is, "The pure in heart shall

see God," not infer his existence, or take it for granted, or prove it by piling probabilities to the sky. The pure in heart shall see God, include his being in the rapture of immediate vision. Faith thus finds God, enters into communion with him, substitutes his thoughts for its own, learns to live out of his mind and heart, goes over to his side for the truth, and comes back to support itself by the strength it has found. This is the great note of faith. It carries in its heart the assurance that it has abandoned its original position of isolation, ignorance, and fear. It is a sort of solitary Columbus. The great mariner left the old world behind, abandoned its barren security, put out to sea, sailed onward into a long succession of sunsets, crossed at length the unknown deep, found a new world, stored his ship with its riches, and returned with his vast prize. A similar feat faith believes that it has performed. It has a surmise, a dream, a conviction of the living God. It will not rest in its iso-



lation and poverty. It abandons its past, sets out in search of the Eternal, goes sounding on its dim and perilous way, sights the Divine Reality at last, lands upon God's side of the universe, enters into a sublime league with him, fills its heart with his judgments, and returns to live and die by them. The thing to be noted is that the intelligent Christian believes in immortality, not primarily because he thinks it is true, or hopes it may be true, or sees no reason why it should not be true; but because he feels that somehow he has reached the mind of God upon the question. He has carried his case to the Highest, and has had the verdict of the Highest returned in his favor.

This is the intellectual position occupied by faith, and the next task is to ascertain, if possible, the paths by which the believer leaves himself and crosses over to the Divine side of the universe. Columbus had the sea and his ships; and the believer is not without tides that set toward the Eter-

nal, nor is he destitute of means to ride upon their calm or tumultuous currents. For close at hand are the great instincts that plead for the dignity and permanence of man. There is an instinct that assures every man of the reality of the external world. Analyze that reality as you may, construe it as you please, it is there as reality, attested by a feeling that is universal and practically invincible. Science accepts the external world on the strength of that feeling; and every form of idealism that is not wild will admit that, however impossible it may be to pass beyond the human consciousness or to recognize in it a reality foreign to its nature, still the voice of another is heard in its halls, the presence of another is beheld in its home. Upon the witness of a feeling, the trade, the science, the whole fruitful movement of the outward life, goes on. The reality of the cosmos is first of all given in feeling; the intellectual justifications are elaborated from the testimony of that simple and su-

preme witness. A corresponding feeling vouches for the reality of the moral universe and for the permanence of man's relation to it. The sense of a universal moral order and its unlimited claim upon the human soul are facts in the feelings, at least, of civilized man. These divinations of a transcendent world, these contacts with a supernal reality, these feelings induced by a presence other than human, are underneath all belief, are, indeed, the mother of all faith. To their persistence and creative power we owe the great worlds elaborated by spiritual insight. They are the ultimate fountains in our humanity, and wherever they are unchoked they create the river of God. Their true history seems to be that they are in us, yet not altogether of us. They pass through the highways of our life like the wire-paths for the electric current in the street; they carry forward with inexhaustible vigor the best work of humanity. But they do not seem to begin or end with this earth. They are God's lightning,

drawn out of heaven, stored in human hearts, and spread through human society to do God's work. Their character bids us look for a worthy cause. These feelings would seem to result within men from the order of their nature, spoken to by God in the night, and answering him in the darkness and out of the depths. They would appear to be the tides of our being that follow the pull of his power, the secret and sublime gravitation of the heart into faith in response to the call of the Almighty. While the universe is so great, and reason in the multitude is so low, these high instincts will continue to be one of the strongest supports of belief in the permanence of man. They do not represent our wishes ; they are not here because we have invited them. They represent the Maker of mankind ; they are his ambassadors, and they bring their credentials from the Eternal. They are here as the sea is here at the flood, because the universe rolled them hither, because God sent them. Why

should the believer not trust these high feelings that originate, not in his will, but in his nature, these surges from the eternal deep that carry upon their white crests and toss upon their glorious spray the verdict of the Infinite in favor of the life everlasting?

Kinship with the Infinite, or what in religious phraseology is called sonship, is another path to the Divine side. If a man should meet a being whose language, signs for thought, and symbols for the world were wholly different from his own, with absolutely no point of contact between them, he would never be able to arrive at any knowledge of that being. Kinship between them existing nowhere, it would be impossible ever to come to a mutual understanding. They would be to one another like the stone faces that stare at each other from the opposite columns of some gate. It would be sphinx looking at sphinx in endless perplexity and everlasting silence. In the same way, if the Infinite by which

man's life is surrounded were like this strange being, an absolute and eternal contrast to humanity, knowledge itself would be impossible. One would be permanently unable to discover anything, to find thought in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath; to understand the figure and motion of the globe, the orbits and orders of the stars; to reach any sort of science upon any subject whatever. In that case the universe and human beings would be to one another as Job and his friends: they would sit down in silence, look at each other in dumb surprise, and marvel at the common and eternal perplexity.

Because we do know men and things; because the world lends itself to thought, melts into the receptivities of sense, runs into the forms of the understanding, rises into a unity that corresponds to the personal unity of the soul; because the world is an intelligible world, we believe that it is alive with mind, that it is an expression of the Infinite Mind, and that in reading its

order we are reaching his plan. The plan of the human mind in sense, in understanding, and in the personal spirit, is marvelously adjusted to the surrounding and infinite universe. If men were not constituted in a certain way the cosmic force could not give them all substantially the same experience in the senses. The "sunshine is a glorious birth" to the normal human being everywhere; the sound of the going in the tops of the mulberry-trees repeats its rhythm alike in the ears of prophet and servant; the rosebush wet with dew sends its perfume into the faces of all; the fruit that is fair to the eye is discovered to be sweet to the taste; and the solid earth supports the steps of the solitary wayfarer and the tread of Cæsar's legions. There is thus adjustment between the Infinite Force and human sensibility; there is this universal plan lying in the receptivity, and that plan can be nothing else than the device of our Maker. There is the logical understanding with its forms

of thought. The world must be construed as a world of substances, as substances in relation, as substances that precede one another, or that coexist, or that follow after. Science is the application of these logical forms to the impressions of sense; and the fact that they can be so applied shows a universal order in the human intellect, and an answering flexibility upon the part of the cosmos that amounts to a marvelous correspondence. Further, as man cannot rest with mere multiplicity, nor with multiplicity in mere order; as he must rise to the highest form of unity, that of his own soul, and try to construe the cosmos through personality, he finds that again the universe is tractable and gathers itself up into the expression of one Supreme Intelligence. This preadjustment between sensibility and the Infinite, between the effect of the Infinite in sensibility and the understanding, between the unity in the Infinite and the unity in man, is self-evident; and it vindicates the belief that supports the



entire intellectual toil of the race, that at heart man and the universe are akin. Over against the human mind in manifold manifestations there stands the universe. Knowledge is possible upon man's part, because there is a mighty characteristic of identity between them. Two idiots might look at each other forever, and neither would be able to make anything out of the other; and if one were an idiot and one a normal human being, the same hopeless result would follow. Nothing like knowledge is possible between idiots, or between a sound mind and an idiot. And similarly, between an irrational creature and an irrational universe there could be no communion; nor could there be any fellowship between a reasonable being and a world without reason. As Dr. Fairbairn expresses it, "The madman could make nothing of the sane world, and the mad world would drive the sane man mad."

Now, if the universe and man are at heart akin, if in his inmost being man is

the image of his Maker, his son, it follows that when the sonhood in man speaks, and speaks for life everlasting, it is the Godhood in man that speaks and speaks for life everlasting. Sonhood in man is but the expression of the Godhood beyond man; and when the sonhood declares its judgment in favor of the deathless life, that declaration is not of man but of God. When the accredited ambassador speaks, the king speaks; and when the filial consciousness in man attests his immortality it simply records and transmits the verdict of the Infinite. "If our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God."<sup>1</sup> And it must be forever borne in mind that the belief in the divine sonship of man is not something with which theology and religion have alone to do. It is a belief that makes possible the reality of science, the reality of all knowledge whatsoever.

Still another path to the Eternal is the truth of the ideal and man's answering

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iii. 21.

capacity. We do not discover our ideals ; they discover us. They take us to the housetop, as Samuel took Saul, and there in the name of the new day that is breaking they tell us that we are kings. They find us as the same seer found David among the sheepfolds, lost to the dignity of existence under its dead monotony, and they anoint us in the name of the Eternal. We do not create our ideals ; we awake to behold them bright with an everlasting light. They do not originate in human hearts ; they rise like the stars out of the Infinite. They are objectively real, mountains at whose base men are born, and whose steeps they are to climb. They are the forms which the ethical character of the Eternal assumes in the human imagination, and their sublime chant is, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."<sup>1</sup> They are moulded by unseen hands and colored by the light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world. Their function

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 48.

is like that of the chariot of fire and the horses of fire that descended from heaven and swept the man of God away. They carry men out of their appetites, away from sordidness ; they take them from the triviality and vanity of existence, snatch them from the brute order of the actual, and in fires and splendors and whirlwinds from the Infinite transport them into the realm of duty, the world of moral service and recompense, the paradise of truth and peace. And whoever speaks in the name of the ideal speaks in the name of the Highest ; whoever renders the verdict of the ideal repeats the judgment of God.

At this point it is worth while to consider for a moment the note of permanence in man's existence in this world of change. To those who have looked into the heart of the process of knowledge, and who stand outside the prejudices of philosophy, one of two things seems necessarily true. Either knowledge is a simple fact, incapable of explanation, a sheer and everlasting mys-

tery, or it is the work and expression of an abiding self. If anything in metaphysics has ever been proved, it is the impossibility of accounting for perception, memory, imagination, reasoning, and choice, with the person who perceives, remembers, imagines, reasons, and elects, wholly ignored and even annihilated. Simple obstinacy prevails in all departments of intellectual life, and will-worship has been a great discredit to philosophy. Experts engaged in a passionate polemic have too often, in the history of speculation, shown themselves possessed of a marvelous faculty for the evasion of what would seem to be a simple exposition of reality. The evil can be ended only by insight into the business on hand, by asking how the multiplicity in sense, in memory, in imagination, in reason, and in will can be reduced to unity without the activity of the permanent soul. Science, history, art, philosophy, and character are our greater unities, and it passes all comprehension how they can even appear to exist, if

they are not the varied expression of the simple, perdurable, creative spirit in man. How the notion of a universe ever dawned upon a life that is a mere multiplicity, how this ultimate and sublime unity ever appeared upon the field of thronging sensations and incessant change, must remain an absolute mystery. For after all the universe as it stands in human thought is not given; it is made. And again, how that which has in itself no unity can yet work this greatest of all wonders, this boundless order that we name the universe, is a puzzle too hard for man to solve. The old argument for immortality, from the fact of continuance amid change, from the great feature of identity and self-persistence in the unresting flow of consciousness, is good at least to the extent that it carries the highest in man over into the category of the things that abide. The rock that shows its steadfast face above the sea thereby declares that it is not a thing of ebbing and flooding tides, of the waste created by form-

ing or the increase brought by dissolving clouds ; it discovers itself as part of the enduring structure of the earth. There would seem to be, in the fact of self-consciousness, a certificate from the hand of the Creator of superiority to the animal orders and their fate.

In the moral sphere the unity which the upright spirit actually possesses, and the unity after which it hungers and thirsts, is still more significant of the class of existences to which it would appear to belong. To entertain a single supreme purpose throughout life, as many good men have done ; to order the entire capacity, so that the greatest possible service may be rendered to the elected cause, — to Christianity with Paul and Luther, Edwards and Channing ; to the emancipation of England with Cromwell ; to the preservation of the Union of the United States of America with Lincoln ; to the welfare of single communities with a host of teachers and helpers of mankind, — secures a moral unity for the human

career that is impressive indeed. And this unity of device and endeavor is followed by a subjective unity, by the life becoming all of a piece and the piece of the best ; as the apostle expresses it, " the simplicity that is in Christ," a condition of existence where the moral personality is harmonious, and where the harmony is of the Highest. If there be in the universe an Absolute Character, the characters which appear in good men would seem to classify themselves with him, and to reveal his purpose concerning mankind.

When the fundamental unity of the mental life is expressed in the persistent holding, through good report and through evil, to one ultimate and ever-greatening ideal, and in the steadfast and passionate effort at its realization in human society ; when, through these projections of itself in ever-brightening vision and in more consistent and heroic endeavor, the inward man is slowly but surely coming into concord with its supreme aim, there follows the aspiration for



union with the Highest, the consciousness of fellowship with God, the note of permanence that then marks the soul would seem to be beyond dispute. Human life then appears as if it had gone over to the Divine side of things, as if it had become an abiding expression of the Infinite Character and Purpose. It is this capacity to share in the thought of the Highest, this aptitude for a life concurrent with the Universal Life, that is the deepest prophecy of man's immortality. And when the capacity is turned, as in multitudes of cases it has been, into an ineffable experience, it would seem as if the sense of everlastingness which it carries in itself must be trustworthy. Speaking of Dean Mansel's book, "The Limits of Religious Thought," Dr. Martineau writes, "We should rejoice that it had been given to the world if only for the reply which it has called forth from Mr. Maurice, — a reply which is not merely the embodiment of a completely opposite conviction, but the insurrection of an outraged faith, the pro-

test of a whole character against a doctrine which pronounces that all the springs of its life have been delusions, and which tries to pass off human notions of God in place of God.”<sup>1</sup> The denial of the Divine universe is the denial of that which has been the source of the best life of mankind. It is not simply a polemic against a notion ; it is a contest against the deepest reality, the reality that feeds the character of the brave and good. To tear the religious soul from this ground of its existence is like uprooting the tree. It means death. That attempt may call forth intellectual defenses of the immortality that is denied ; it must call forth something infinitely deeper, “the insurrection of an outraged faith, the protest of a whole character.”

It must never be forgotten that humanity is involved in this faith, that humanity is its witness. Upon the great postulate or assumption, in the teeth of much that seems to contradict it, that God is absolutely good,

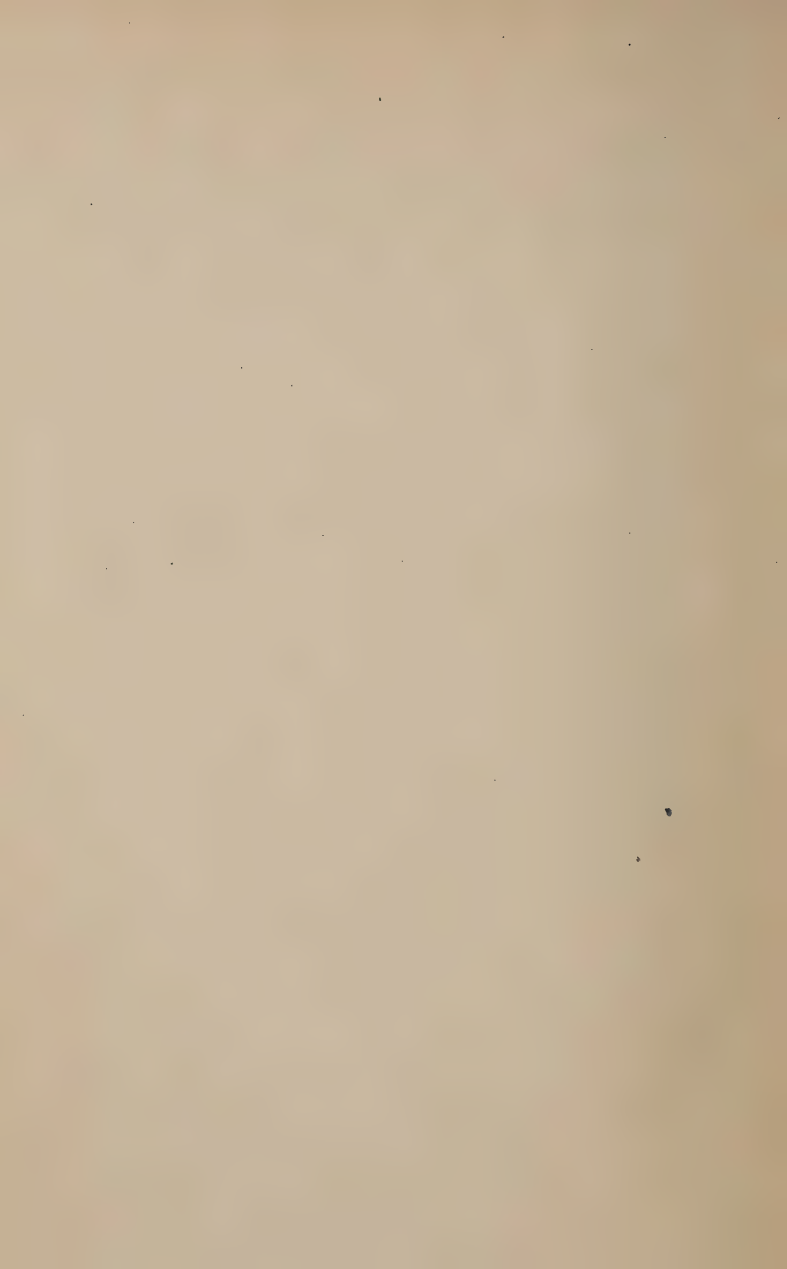
<sup>1</sup> *Essays, Philosophical and Theological*, p. 283.

humanity consciously and unconsciously is making trial of its vast faith. It persists in believing that the universe is reasonable, and that human life in its best achievement, in its best capacity, and in its enduring moral need, is of permanent concern to the Most High. Thus inspired it is working out its own salvation. Through the higher instincts, not of one man, but of all men; through the kinship to the Infinite, not of single lives, but of all lives; through the ideals that dawn, not upon a few favored individuals, but upon mankind; finally, through the great note of permanence in the soul, the universe would seem to be delivering its decree concerning the dignity and destiny of the race. Nor would there appear to be any assignable limit to this witness when humanity as a whole shall acknowledge its chief task in this world as moral, and shall stand to it with something like the full consecration of its power. The ethical constitution of the race is plain, and for the purpose of this discussion it is

weighty with prophecy. But ethical experience of an exalted type must be added to ethical constitution. It is hard for the Infinite to speak through his bare device in the moral nature of man, unsupported and even sorely contradicted as it so often is by volition and character. A Beethoven cannot fully reveal himself through musical signs. The wonderful symphonies are indeed there, but they are hidden. The faithful and inspired interpreter must come, and through groups of instruments unseal the fountains of harmony. The moral constitution of the race is but the musical notation. The eternal melodies are there, but they are silent. The race must become partner in the moral enterprise, fellow-worker with the universe at its ethical task, if its heart of rhythm and soul of fire are to stand fully revealed. It is this voice that the prophet of to-day waits to hear, the voice like the sound of many waters and mighty thunderings, rolling through all the deeper and greater humanities, the voice of the Infinite speaking

through the race, at length become harmonious with his righteous purpose in history, and registering his decree in favor of the immortality of man.









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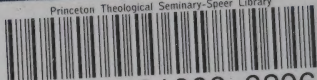
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